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Examined my features, skin and bone
Looked at the face I've always known
It was a wonderful disguise.

Mike Scott

New

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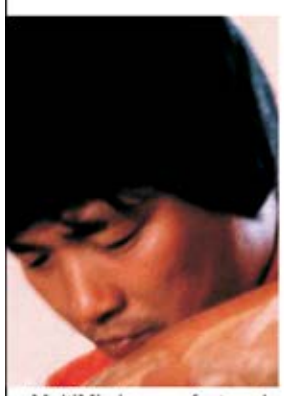

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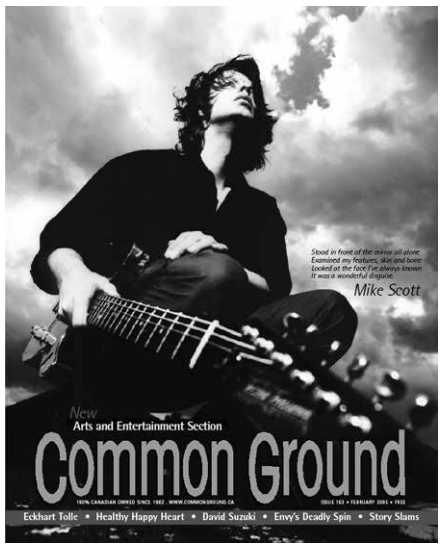
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OUR COVER British singer/songwriter Mike Scott has his head in the clouds in photographer Steve Gullick's promo shot for the 2001 Waterboys album A Rock in The Weary Land. The picture perfectly captures the mood of illumination and ascent in Scott's two decades of song. All pictures of Mike Scott in this February issue are courtesy Michael Hawkins and www.mikescottwaterboys.com.

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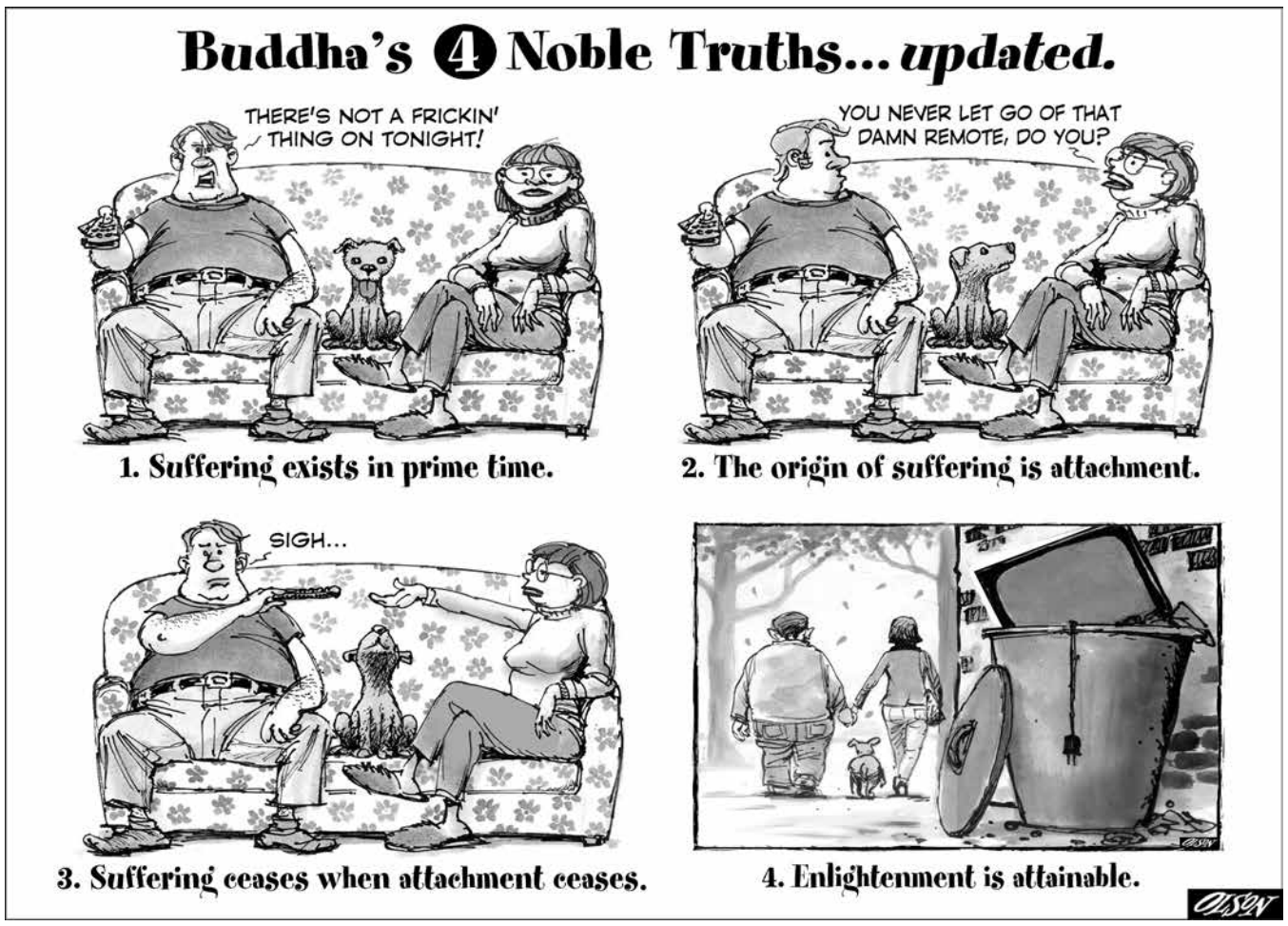
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1. Suffering exists in prime time.
YOU NEVER LET GO OF THAT DAMN REMOTE, DO YOU?
2. The origin of suffering is attachment.
SIGH...
3. Suffering ceases when attachment ceases.
4. Enlightenment is attainable.
OLSON

The artist as early warning system

INTRODUCING THE COMMON GROUND ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT SECTION

by Geoff Olson

When multimedia artist Laurie Anderson performed recently in Vancouver, she mused how life is often like bad art. Characters come and go and never return. The plot changes randomly. Entire themes are abandoned halfway through. Unlike art, life's point of view is always first person singular, in the present tense. (And usually a tense present.)

So one big purpose of art, for both the creator and the audience, is to give life the form it often lacks. Any artist worth his or her salt hopes to make a mark, to rise above mere trends, even if that expectation is something of a tall order in a culture with the attention span of a ferret on crystal meth.

Being ahead of your time has its down side, evidenced by the struggling artist's steady diet of Kraft dinner and humble pie. Prophets are rarely welcome in their own age – partly because of their habit of figuring out something stinks before the rest of us have even had a whiff. The creative contributor to culture has been compared to a "canary in a coal mine," a reference to miners bringing the birds down coal shafts because of their sensitivity to toxic gases such as carbon monoxide. Any signs of distress from the canaries was a clear sign that conditions were unsafe and the miners should evacuate.

Canadian media guru Marshall McLuhan offered a different metaphor with a similar point. "I think of art, at its most significant, as a DEW line, a Distant Early Warning system that can always be relied on to tell the old culture what is beginning to happen to it," he wrote in the sixties. McLuhan was as much an oracle as a scholar, and it wasn't until fairly recently that his more cryptic utterances began to make sense. A highly creative writer who refused to observe the protocols of academic writing, the University of Toronto prof was on the DEW line himself.

Sometimes it seems as if artists aren't just registering seismic trends with their sensitive equipment, they are remote-viewing the future – or even conjuring it into being. "It is well known that art will often – for example, in pictures – precede the perceptible reality by years," wrote the philosopher Walter Benjamin in the 1930s. "It was possible to see streets or rooms (in paintings) that show all sorts of fiery colors long before technology, by means of illuminated signs and other arrangements, actually set them under such a light. Whoever understands how to read these semaphores in advance not only knows about currents in the arts but also about legal codes, wars and revolutions."

The stuff of today's headlines is the content of yesterday's canvases, films, novels, and music. Fear over mutated viruses? Check out either Michael Crichton's novel or film The Andromeda Strain from three decades earlier. Frankenstein scenarios from genetically modified organisms? That's a whole subgenre of bio-horror, ranging from to Jules Verne's The Island of Doctor Moreau to Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake. Computer age dystopias, with humans going cyber? The flesh-made-weird paintings of Hans Giger have combined machinery with biology for years, decorating rock album jackets and inspiring director Ridley Scott's Aliens film series. Domestic surveillance and virtual worlds run amok? Pick up any of Philip K. Dick's novels from decades back for a possible preview of a reality we're building with our technical necromancy. Or go see the relatively recent films that were based on his books, once the world caught up with him: Blade Runner, Total Recall, Minority Report. All of these productions still seem like postcards from the future.

It's no surprise that some artists seem to have a crystal ball, if you consider they're sometimes responsible for entirely new idioms. These are often jarringly dissonant to the "cultured" eyes and ears of their time. Igor Stravinsky's orchestral composition The Rite of Spring provoked riots when

continued on page 18

*"How Often Do You Hear Yourself Saying: "**NO, I Haven't Done It Yet**: I've Been Meaning To!"*

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Their minds are a hodge-podge of half baked ideas and "we've been meaning too's". They think of a thousand "schemes" to make money quickly—but DO nothing about them. Thoughts flash in and out of their brain with the speed of lightning. New ideas rush in pegged, crowding out old ones before they have taken form, shape or completion.

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Their mind is like a powerful automobile running wild—destroying their hopes and dreams, their **POSSIBILITIES!** They wonder why they don't get ahead and never get anything done. They cannot understand why others, with less ability, pass them in the prosperity parade.They pity themselves, excuse themselves, and sympathize with themselves.
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It is no different with those rare mental faculties which you envy others for possessing. You actually **DO** possess them, but they are **ALMOST HALF-STARVED**, like unused muscles, simply because they are faculties you seldom, if ever, USE.
Be honest with yourself. You know in your heart that you can **have more, be more, and attain more** if you just begin to do the things you know you need to get down now!

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- **"Why am I procrastinating?"**
- **"Why can't I get anything done?"**

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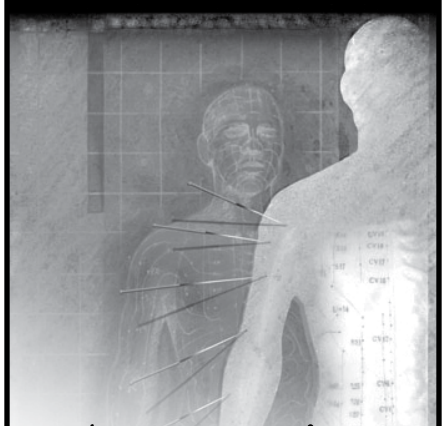

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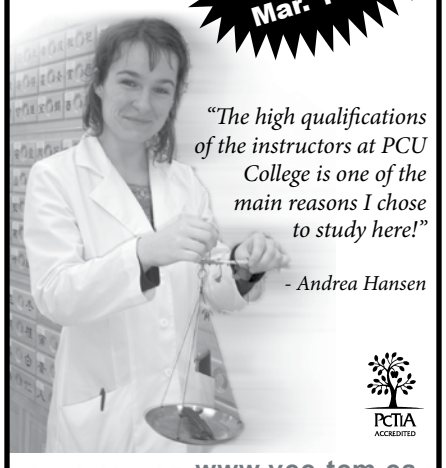

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A wonderful disguise
Mike Scott and The Waterboys

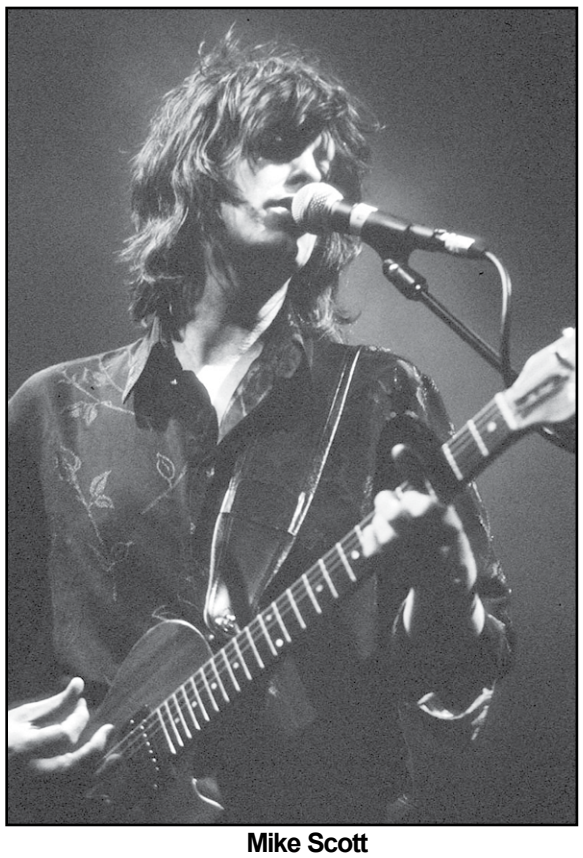
by Geoff Olson

Most of us have experienced one or two peak musical experiences from live performances. A memorable moment for this writer occurred during The Waterboys' 2001 appearance at the Commodore. Lead singer Mike Scott mentioned catching a glimpse of a cloven-hoofed figure in Stanley Park, and then launched into the incendiary The Return of Pan. Ignoring the local fire code, the band burned the venue down.

Mention The Waterboys to most Canadian music fans, and the response is often a shrug, or at most recollection of the band's anthemic mid-eighties single, The Whole of the Moon. What they don't know is that the bandleader, singer/songwriter Mike Scott, has never stopped making music. For nearly two decades Scott has squeezed songs of love and spiritual transformation from the neck of his electric and acoustic guitars – without ever hitting a false note, either as a solo artist or with his group.

Taking their name from a line in Lou Reed's Berlin, The Waterboys first hit the UK music scene at a time it was exploding with forgettable hair bands and novelty acts. Scott himself once described The Waterboys' anthemic oeuvre as the "big music," a term seized on by music critics as a blanket term covering the epic work of U2, Simple Minds and Big Country.

Attempts to combine rock and reverence often result in musical Hallmark moments, or Spinal Tap-like gibberish about spirits and standing stones. Not Scott's efforts. The mythic references in his stunningly melodic pieces are often literary – bits of W.B. Yeats and C.S. Lewis in particular. Yet the Scottish-born singer hews to no denominational or doctrinal line. This is truly world music. You may be able to identity fragments of religious or mystical imagery in his lyrics, but the inclusion is to serve the music, not hammer home a message.



Mike Scott

When The Whole of the Moon hit the airwaves in 1984, the band seemed destined for arena rock greatness. In 1988 it switched its musical recipe with Fisherman's Blues, an Irish stew of penny whistles and violins, mistiming the Celtic music craze of the early nineties. By the time Michael Flately was swanning about with Riverdance, Scott was recording a solo album with a distinctly folkie feel, his quietly transcendental Bring 'Em All In. Another solo effort followed, and in 2001, he reformed The Waterboys for the thunderous elegy A Rock In the Weary Land. The lineup of the band was and is ever-changing; with Scott as the eye of the storm. According to The Waterboys FAQ from the official website, "Several Irishmen and one Irishwoman have been members at various times and the group was based in Dublin from 1986 to 1991. At other times the group has been based in London or New York. The Waterboys have had English, Welsh, American and other Scottish members too."

Perversely, there is no Canadian distributor for The Waterboys last album, 2003's Universal Hall. But Scott is busy with future efforts, he informs me by email, including "a new album, a likely live album and a DVD of The Waterboys on-tour home movies and concert footage." The singer-songwriter expects them to be on the same label, Puck, as Universal Hall. (That means we will have to content ourselves with import discs, though his past catalog is available here from bigger labels.)

Scott is quoted on website Kindred Spirit on his musical influences. "I was a child in the 1960s and for me the best of rock n' roll was The Beatles singing All You Need Is Love – they were right too – and Hey Jude with its deep sense of forgiveness and community. Both songs expressed unity and transcendence, and for me that is the highest purpose of rock music."

While today's radio-friendly rockers continue to churn out their crop of generically altered tunes, Scott is content to plant seed in greener fields. The Kindred Spirit website notes that although The Waterboys have been internationally influential as a rock and folk band, "the spiritual community has had little awareness of the profound spiritual dimension of much of their music." There are only a handful of current rock n' rollers considered to be poets by fans and critics alike (Van Morrison, Bob Dylan, and Nick Cave come to mind), but no rocker touches on the inner world and its mythic dimensions with quite his intent or intensity. Kindred Spirit's review of Universal Hall flatly states that "never before has rock music been so aligned to the Perennial Philosophy, stood so balanced on the pulse of the new paradigm, or articulated

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For a two-year period in the mid-nineties, Scott lived at an educational, spiritual community near Inverness called Findhorn.

Mike remained as a long-term guest in 1994, working in the kitchens and gardens. He recorded his first solo album, Bring Em All In, in the foundation's small recording studio.

Some of the songs from the album may seem cryptic on first listen. Many listeners, trained by generations of disposable pop music to ignore the words, do just that – a big mistake when it comes to Scott's musical meditations. His songs work as straight poetry, as evinced by the 1995 album's breathtaking track, Wonderful Disguise:

Through the curtain the daylight crept
I looked at my lover as she slept
And as I watched her face I wept
It was a wonderful disguise.

Scott recites the strangers he encounters throughout the day: a driver turning to look at him in traffic; a blind man addressing him outside a museum; a fat woman in a queue; a drunk on the stairs as he returns home; and the president "on the news at 10, looking like he could use a friend." All of them, he decides, wearing a wonderful disguise.

Stood in front of the mirror all alone
Examined my features, skin and bone
Looked at the face I've always known
It was a wonderful disguise.

He explained the inspiration by email. "I was living in the Findhorn community in the mid 1990s and started to see divinity in peoples' faces, in their eyes. I told a more experienced community friend and she said 'you are seeing God in all his wonderful disguises'. I knew in my heart then she was right – and now I know it in my whole being."

"(Findhorn) changed the way I look at life and other people forever," he noted on the Waterboys' official website. "I realized everyone really is the same deep underneath, with the same longing to love and be loved. Behind all our appearances, as one writer says, 'There is only one of us here.' "

In a time when genuine, heartfelt love songs are thin on the ground, Scott's romantic tunes are often ecstatic, boundless, worshipful, like the grand and simple She Is So Beautiful, written about his soulmate discovered during a mid-nineties stay at Findhorn. (Even a song of romantic refusal, like his earlier We Will Not Be Lovers, has a cosmic edge.) I can find little to compare his love songs with in the archives of contemporary music, but I do see similarities with the poetry of the 13th century Persian poet Jelaluddin Rumi. At its core, Scott's music beats with a big, magnificent heart, fired by that one thing you cannot fake and that you rarely hear in today's top 40: honest-to-God joy.

So where does that joy come from? Mike responds that his term "big music" means "seeing the divine in nature or art, or otherwise abroad in the world." It's this sense of a bigger picture that informs his resilient sense of optimism. I asked about Dumbing Down the World, a track from the distinctly dark 2001 Waterboys album Rock in the Weary Land. The song addresses the broadcast media's ignorance-by-design, a cancer metastasizing on both sides of the Atlantic. In spite of this electric howl of outrage, in which Jerry Springer gets particular mention, Mike rejects a suggestion that the global stupidity quotient has gone up since a certain day in New York. "Perhaps the apparent presence of ignorance is strong, but who knows what is really going on? I would be more inclined to think that there is increasing sophistication of awareness, increasing coherency in the world, especially with the opportunities for information exchange we experience in today's world."

But given the state of the world today, is Scott optimistic for the human prospect? "I don't get disturbed about the future. I try to be aware of what goes on in the present, and to see it in an undistorted way. I know there are reasons for all the seemingly good and bad phenomena we see – some reasons are very deep, most, of which I cannot perceive. I bless the world and seek to see it in all its aspects without

continued on page 13

MORE ANSWERS FROM MIKE

Geoff Olson interview of Mike Scott

GO You seem to be a big fan of Jimi Hendrix, who figures in two of your songs. Can you tell us a bit about him in terms of inspiring you? Who else has inspired you creatively?

MS I was not a big Jimi fan in my youth, though I respected him. Then in the early nineties I got turned on to him and shortly after had the dream from which the *Return of Jimi Hendrix* song was written. The artists who inspired me as a teenager were Dylan, The Beatles and Stones, David Bowie and The Who. Later I loved Van Morrison, and in the late eighties I fell in love with Scottish and Irish Celtic traditional music. I like loads of different things though – not just the above.

GO On *Universal Hall*, the songs are simple, even lyrically repetitive. Yet I find these to be among your most powerful songs. Are you are trying to hit the listener by repeating these lines over and over to break through at some level?

MS I have to confess that among the motives for those minimalist lyrics is the one of deliberately directing the idea contained in the lyric beneath the radar of the mind. And if I keep singing "I'm gonna look twice at you until I see the Christ in you" over and over, without changing lyric, the listener has to deal with that idea. That was what I wanted with those songs. I also worked with affirmations over many years, and I appreciate the power of a simple well-worded repeated phrase.

GO I take it you regard corporate rock radio dimly. Can you tell us which band was "playing endless mindless" in the lyrics of *Let It Happen*?

MS I have no opinion on radio because I never listen to it. The band playing the hooligan's lament in *Let It Happen* was Oasis.

GO You have followed your own star throughout the years. Any advice to artists and creators who may feel discouraged?

MS I wish someone had given me this advice when I was starting out: Act on your passions, trust yourself and learn from your own mistakes. This is the advice I would give any other artist.

GO The song *Bring 'Em All In* could be read as a tribute to compassion. It could also be imagined as the source singing all created things back to their beginnings in spirit. Would that be about right?

MS That is kind of right. The song began as me singing back all the parts of myself; lost parts, happy parts, sad parts, nurtured parts, neglected parts, calling them all into my heart, effectively to touch them all with love – and the song can and should be taken in a universal way too.

GO Do you have any thoughts on the healing power of music?

MS A great thing about music is we are all free to choose to listen to whatever music we want to. I'm sure people who passionately listen to death metal are getting something valuable from it – a sense of identity or belonging, something that serves the phase or season of the soul they're in. The same goes for me. I listen to what serves me, and I like to listen to something that loves me; music that loves me and credits me with an ability to perceive and respond to beauty and soul. And if that comes through the filter of death metal I might listen to that too!

GO Any chance you will play again in Vancouver sometime soon?

MS No plans, but I always love playing Vancouver. It's been too long!

GO Where are you living now? How's life these days?

MS I live in Findhorn, and all is very, very well.

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Envy

THE SEVEN DEADLY SPINS CONTINUES

by Geoff Olson

Greed drives the desire for profit at any cost. Envy is a mainstay of the fashion industry, and marketing as a whole. Anger is subtly exploited in the Army of One fantasies of video games and recruitment advertisements. Pride fuels the "high self-esteem" bandwagon. In the era of hypercapitalism, these and most of the other so-called deadly sins have been rehabilitated by the market as positive, even praiseworthy, states of mind. "Sin" has been spun. Hence, what I call The Deadly Spins.

Everytimeafriendsucceeds,alittlesomething in me dies.

– Gore Vidal

In the middle ages, the corrosive emotion of envy was an obvious choice for Pope Gregory's list of seven deadly sins. Yet it is qualitatively different from the other scourges of the spirit. Unlike anger, pride, lust, gluttony, greed, or sloth, envy never gives the illusion of short-term pleasure. From the moment it starts, envy only brings anguish and sorrow.

We are flooded daily with mass media images of beautiful people having expensive fun in magnificent surroundings. Of all the Deadly Spins – desires once considered sins and now spun into beneficent forces by modern marketers – envy moves the most product. The nagging sense of not measuring up to the super-beautiful, super-rich standard set by popular culture festers away under the collective consciousness like an unlanced boil, driving us into the market for some fashionable fix.

The disease has even inflamed modern relationships. A study conducted recently on the dating preferences of men and women found that the expected minimum for physical beauty has risen over the past two decades. Younger generations expect more in a partner in terms of appearance.

Is this because of all the perfectly symmetrical faces, with their indices of glowing genetic health, staring out at us seductively from magazine racks and TVs, or projected to godlike dimensions on the movie screen? The authors of the study suggest this is indeed the case. The multiplication of these media images means there are greater numbers of young men and women who will no longer accept "average" looks. They want to re-imagine themselves as desirable hotties – and if they sometimes doubt they meet the pop culture gold standard themselves, they can at least demand this bar is reached by a partner.

What animates this attitude isn't so much beauty per se, as the fact that the famous are generally much better looking than the non-famous. The train is fame; movie-star looks are the caboose. On the popular singles website nerve.com, dating singles get to respond to the category, "what celebrity I resemble the most." Respondents offer "Meg Ryan type," "Russell Crowe look-alike," and the occasional modest comparison to a lesser star not considered conventionally beautiful. Celebrity is increasingly the baseline comparison for ourselves and others.

The envy industry is everywhere these days, but one area of the world stands out. According to Salon contributor Cintra Wilson, the event horizon of this spiritual black hole is found in Los Angeles, and the singularity where reality ceases entirely is Hollywood. Wilson is arguably the most savage critic of the celebrity-seeking mindset. Her book A Massive Swelling is subtitled Celebrity Re-Examined As a Grotesque, Crippling Disease, and it effectively eviscerates the Californication of the North American self-concept, along with the "kind of screaming pink self-loathing that burns supersonically through all psyches in LA like a dated racing stripe."

Wilson moved to Los Angeles in 1995, with the intent to creatively carve out another aperture in its commodified culture. "What better place to go than a city that orchestrates all the attitudes I hate the most about the American mentality?" she wrote. "I thought I would fiddle like Nero with my nourishing little artistic pursuits while Babylon burned."

What she discovered was a city so consumed by envy that its adherents are sometimes literally disabled by it. In one passage, she describes the most relentlessly self-advancing among the LA acting set: Hollywood extras.

"These types of actors are also the people who will go horribly crazy if somebody they know, or vaguely know, gets famous. They have to take to their beds, it's that bad, their lives are over, they are in Hell. They sink into a self-loathing depression that lasts years, and it's all they can think about: "That fucking bitch is famous and I'm not?!? God loves Hitler more than he loves ME!!!"

The deadly spin of envy is fed by the sense of entitlement that runs rampant through the US mindset, according to Wilson. "If a person in this day and age has two cents' worth of talent, it is considered his sacred obligation to Go for the Gold, or try and grab the big brass monkey ring, and otherwise make six to ten demoralizing career-and-connection-oriented phone calls a day, perform painful Top 40 hits at all the high-school graduations and bar mitzvahs, pay hundreds of dollars for eight by ten photographs of themselves looking like sexually available newscasters, and audition with seething positive energy for every Exlax commercial that comes down the pike, until the day that the opportunity for Fame reveals itself like a pinpoint of light down the throat of a large python."

This doesn't just hold in the entertainment profession. The LA zeitgeist has been packaged, shrink-wrapped, and stamped for export to the rest of the US, and the world beyond. Once the box is opened, the contents skitters away like the face-sucking critter in Alien, dripping acid on every field of endeavour, from journalism to science.

I once received an invitation by a media figure in Vancouver to attend a lunch hour gathering of successful artists, writers and musicians. I attended a few times, but the vibe was all wrong. The chumminess felt disingenuous. At one of these lunches, the host leaned over and told me in a hushed voice the reason for my invite: "you never know who's going to be famous next." The invite apparently had little to do with my work. It was about the buzz that was beginning to attend my name. Unfortunately for the collector of soon-to-be-celebs, whatever local buzz I had failed to rise into the air-raid siren of national fame.

This brings us to the ambivalence that celebrity feeds. We both love and hate celebrities, precisely for having all the things we don't, chief among them the constant attention of millions. So we like nothing more than demonstrations that the famous are just like us, or worse. Yet the nimbus of really big-money celebrity comes without a dimmer switch; it can't be turned off. No matter how nutty Marlon Brando got in his old age, he hung on to his cachet. Bob Dylan can turn out any old piece of recorded crap, but he will always be the primal beatnik from Greenwich Village. And in the course of a career suicide, the megawattage of fame may even brighten into full-on infamy, which is even more blinding. Robert Downey Jr.'s successive attempts at druggy self-sabotage did not remove him from the Hollywood A-List (at least not until he was actually jailed and unavailable). In LA, a chemical dependency or some other spectacularly bad behaviour is not a source of disapproval from polite society, as it would be for the rest of us.

It's the source of a book contract, or a series of teary "I'm-a-victim-too" appearances on Oprah or Barbara Walters.

"The implication of Fame in this value-warped society is: you've made it," writes Wilson in A Massive Swelling. "You and your talents are so bright, you are somehow physically and spiritually light-years beyond all us bone-sucking hacks. I yowl in disgust at this bias." The acidic author counsels against thinking of fame as some glorious blessing bestowed on the lucky few, who then demand our fealty. "Let us not worship these people, for it is like bowing down to a two-headed calf: unholy and weird."

Vancouver writer and political cartoonist Geoff Olson can be reached at gefo@telus.net

Slam a story down

with Bolts of Fiction at Our Town Cafe

A Story Slam is a competition of five-minute stories (approximately 1000 words). We pass the hat (suggested donation $5) and judges, recruited from the audience, hold up scorecards after each story with points deducted for going overtime. The top three stories take home the hat. The winning story each month will be published here in the new Arts and Entertainment section of Common Ground. So if you know anyone with some great tales (whether or not they ever write them down), then send 'em down to Our Town to try one out on a fresh audience. Spots are limited, no advance sign-up, stories must be original and there must be a story-line--that is, events taking place over time. Story Slam is held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month from 9 to11pm. Sign up during Word Whips (timed writing exercises) from 7 to 9pm. Our Town Cafe is located at 245 East Broadway at Kingsway. The event is for raconteurs, actors, writers, comedians--yarn-spinners of all ilks. For information contact Johnny Frem at 604-254-0355 or via www.boltsoffiction.org

We recorded the following story at the event and then transcribed it.

The Wichita

A story told by Richard Wagamese

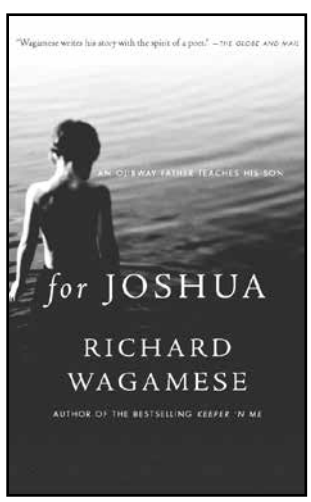
"Before I start, I do something a little bit different. I don't come here with a written story. I come from an oral tradition that gave stories a specific life and when our elders were asked to tell stories to our people, they'd try to discern what it was that the collective needed to hear more than anything and would make up a story or a legend on the spot that would serve that need and part of the process that I work through is to try and put forward the principles of that oral tradition. So I come here and tell a story spontaneously with a trigger phrase. Could you give me a phrase to start with or to use in a story?"

"Buffalo."

"Buffalo? Trigger phrase is: buffalo. I'll start when I turn back 'round."

* * *

They called it the Wichita. In the Ojibway language, Wi-chi-ta is the name that they give the wind that rises suddenly on the prairie, so suddenly and so fiercely that it blows the rain and the snow and the dust in long parallel lines across the land and that wind rises up so fast and so quickly that the old cowboys and the old rounders say that, well, a horse and a cowboy, they get soaked sideways.


"Wagamese writes his story with the spirit of a poet." —THE GLOBE AND MAIL
AN OJIBWAY FATHER TEACHES HIS SON
for JOSHUA
RICHARD WAGAMESE
AUTHOR OF THE BESTSELLING KEEPER 'N ME

It was a good name for the old hotel. There was narry a fair wind that blew around the Wichita. It was old, it was decrepit, it was dark, and it sat on its' shadowed corner, sagging a little on its' foundation--its' walls bowed with the stress of years and years of soggy carpets and drunken parties and maybe a few bodies smashed too hard against the walls, so it was bowed and heavy, sitting there like a...a toad with baleful eyes waiting.

Not many strangers came to the Wichita. The hotel rented rooms upstairs. And the rooms they rented were for the railroad workers and for the oil-well drillers and for the roughnecks and the rowdyboys in that area. A flop-house. Strangers rarely came.

But he came that night and he came because the Wichita was a place to forget and he wanted to forget. He was going to leave home. He decided after months and months of agony that it was time to leave and to leave everything behind. The marriage wasn't working. The communication just wasn't there any longer. He wanted to forget. He stepped into the bar and ordered a beer and started to watch the ball game on TV.

He got a tap on the shoulder. He looked.

There was a ragged little man standing there with a box in his hand and he said, "You want to buy some baseball cards?"

"Now, why would you ask me that?"

"Well I...I saw you watching the game and I...I figured maybe you were a fan and that you might be interested in maybe buying these cards 'cause things haven't really been really too good for me lately and I could really use a...I could really use a break. I... I don't like asking for handouts, so all I really have is this baseball card collection and maybe if you could buy 'em I might make it through a little longer."

He didn't really want to be disturbed, but he thought maybe the conversation would lift him out of his funk and he said, "All right. Well let's see them."

The little man handed him one baseball card.

He looked at it and he said, "I can't even see a name here. I can't see. I can't see anything."

And the raggedy old man said, "It's...it's Rico Petriccelli!"

"You mean that...the old shortstop for the Boston Red Sox?"

"Yes."

He said, "Why do you have this card that's not even legible?"

He said, "Well, you know my Dad and I got that card. We watched the...the Boston Red Sox play the St. Louis Cardinals in 1967 and Rico Petriccelli made this diving catch across the infield. It was amazing. And my Dad got so excited he grabbed me and hugged me as hard as I've ever been hugged before. So special, because my Dad really...didn't...do a lot of hugging. And Rico's card got laundered. He got swam in and he's faded over the years and...I don't want that card anyway. Look at this one."

And he held out another one and the guy looked at it and it was torn in half and he said, "Look, this card, this card is torn in half. Why...why would I want to buy this?"

"But...but it's Bob Gibson!"

"You mean the pitcher for the St. Louis Cardinals?"

"Yeah! And...and I ripped it in half because I got really mad at my Dad one day when he wouldn't take me to the ball game. He wouldn't take me to see Bob Gibson pitch his last game and I ripped it in half and I threw it at him. But he gave it back to me, gave me another one of those big hugs and we went for ice cream and we took a long walk in the...in the country and well, that was the last time I really spent any time with my Dad. He died about two months after that. Sudden coronary. Held on to the card ever since. "

And one by one the little raggedy man showed him baseball card after baseball card--frayed and tattered and torn and worn-out--and with each came a story. And finally at the end of it, he said, "Well, do you want to buy my collection? Would you? Would you please give me some money for these cards? I really need it."

He looked at him and said, "I can't buy these. There's no price in the world that could pay for these. Why don't you just take this?"

He handed him all the money from his wallet, drained his beer, got up and turned to go home--buffaloed by the fact that he would've been leaving things of more value than any wallet could contain.

* * *

Richard Wagamese is a traditional storyteller, a former National Newspaper Award winning columnist and author of three novels and a memoir with Doubleday Canada. His newest, Ragged Company, arrives later this year. His free story-telling circle, Deh-bah-juh-mig (Telling Ourselves), sponsored by Companion Books in Burnaby, will be held at Panne e Dolce, 3615 E. Hastings (near Kootenay Loop) beginning Jan. 31 and continuing every Monday.

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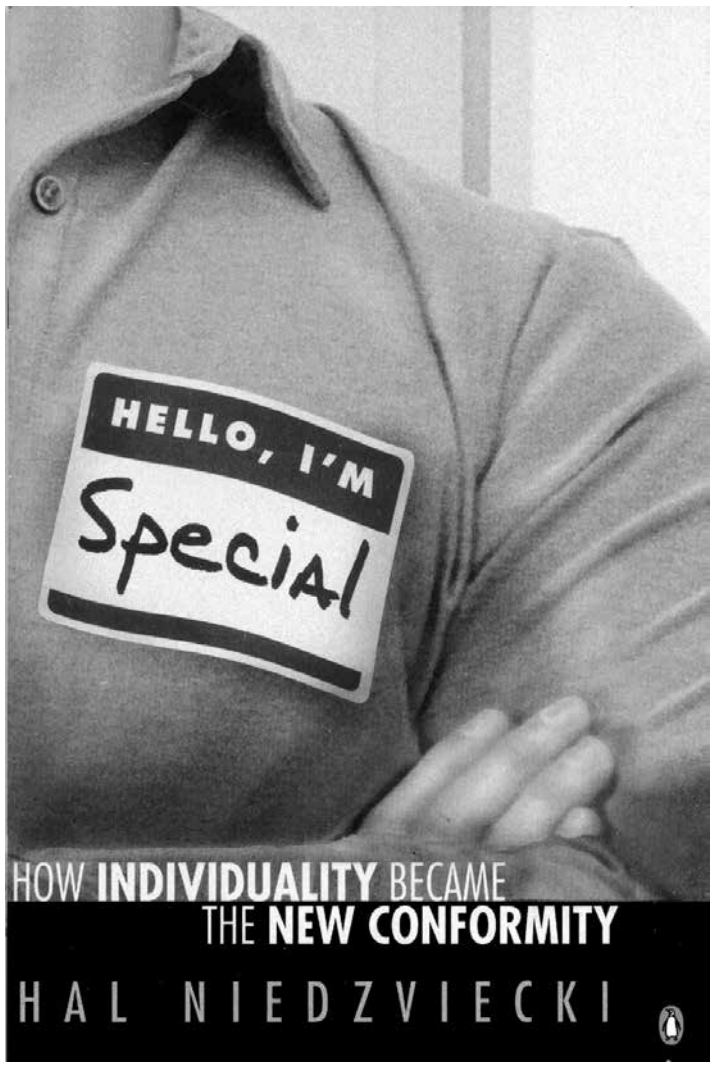
Hello, I'm Special

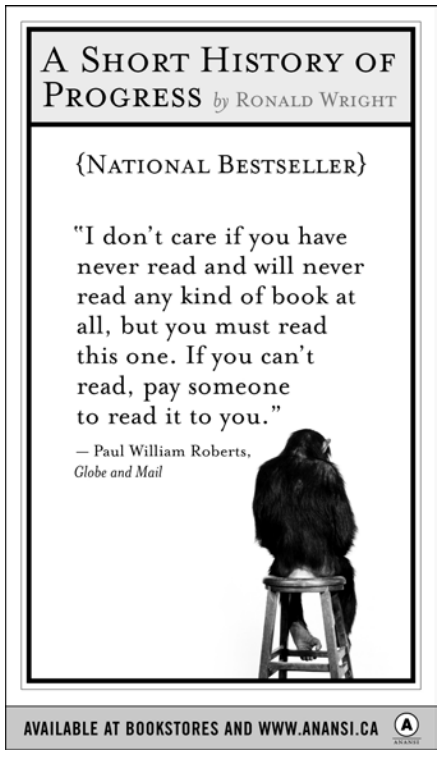
Book review by Geoff Olson

On his 30th birthday, Toronto writer and fringe culture chronicler Hal Niedzviecki received a birthday card from his parents, depicting stiff-looking men in gray suits and overcoats. Inside the card read, "Happy birthday to a nonconformist." It sent his mind off on a tangent. "If I'm a rebel sanctioned by society, encouraged by my parents, and cheered on by Hallmark, what is left to rebel against?" The author sets out to investigate in Hello, I'm Special – with mixed results.



Being a nonconformist in a time when nonconformity is all the rage is a tough gig. The paradoxical desire to stand apart while adopting the poses of others is hardly a new phenomenon, as Niedzviecki seems to suggest. It's been part of every teenager's mythic quest from the fifties on. The only significant difference today is our culture of instant celebrity and assembly-line stardom. On this topic the author scores a few good observations. He indicates the new trend of the celebrity bartender, who "will soon, no doubt, be mixing their own Food Network specials, flying off to the hands of the world to dilute absinthe with crocodile blood in a coconut shaker, memento from a previous adventure tending bar for tribe in the Amazon rainforests."

Hello, I'm Special addresses the marketing problems created by a youthful demographic that has no desire to function as walking billboards for megacorporate labels. Niedzviecki cites the recent success of low-end beer brands such as Labatt's 50 and Pabst's Blue Ribbon with the underemployed hipsters. In finding identification with blue-collar products that aren't hyped by the marketing machinery, consumers have pushed Pabst's sales by 15 percent in a two-year period. "Pabst, desperate not to screw up the revival, is now struggling to figure out how to market to this disparate hipster generation without actually appearing to be marketing."


A SHORT HISTORY OF PROGRESS by RONALD WRIGHT
{NATIONAL BESTSELLER}
"I don't care if you have never read and will never read any kind of book at all, but you must read this one. If you can't read, pay someone to read it to you."
— Paul William Roberts, Globe and Mail
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Where Niedzviecki shines is when he hobnobs with the eccentrics attempting to find some fringe identity through the new media. He visits the headquarters of The World Backyard Wrestling Federation (with its poolside punchups viewable on line) and the trailer park stars of the indy film Mule Skinner Blues, people well past middle age hanging on to their dreams of making it big. The scenes from auditions of Canadian Idol are instructive; although only a very small percentage of the thousands auditioning have a chance for a ticket on the fame train, many of the suburban divas and rappers are anticipating a window seat in first class. He's also very good at nailing some of the creepier practitioners of the self-esteem industry, and a feel-goodism that teaches young people to internalize failure as much as success (the limits aren't outside in the world, but inside you).

It's odd that a book purporting to address identity in an era of mass persuasion makes no mention of the work of Jacques Lacan, Marshall McLuhan, Walter Benjamin, or the early 20th century public relations guru Edward Bernays. The author seems to have little knowledge of sociological currents deeper than Brady Bunch reruns. So not surprisingly, no major thesis emerges from Hello, I'm Special. In fact some of the book's claims seem either all-too-obvious or just plain wrong. Niedzviescki refers to a web site were fellow female anorexics spur each other on to greater heights of self-denial and weight loss.

"The clubby aspect makes me wonder how much of this activity is, again, about a certain one's individuality, conforming to the idea that "I'm special." "It seems far more likely most, if not all, of these women have fallen prey to the advertising industry's imagery of skeletal supermodels. In other words, overshot conformity to a standardized ideal.

The problem is that while the author casts a very wide net, he only skims the frothy surface of popular culture. The main point of his book was summed up with greater economy in the Pixar film The Incredibles, when Elastigirl tells her son Dash that "everybody is special."

"That's just another way of saying no one is," he morosely replies.

Conformity and nonconformity, while polar opposites, are on the same axis. There are gradations of both in everyone's life, and while most people desire to be special, I'll bet few of us would want to think outside the box as much as a Van Gogh or a Galileo if it meant a real loss in social stature or income. Niedzviecki's zinesters and scensters are not so different from everyone else in desiring acceptance and a paycheque; hence their dilemma as iconoclasts. Using the rubbery term "nonconforming conformists" to address a multidimensional human experience means that Niedzviecki ends up describing everything while explaining nothing.

Hello, I'm Special is more of a snack than a meal – a Hostess Twinkie of a trade paperback. For all its tasty anecdotes and tart observations, it leaves you hungry for something more substantial.

Hello, I'm Special by Hal Niedzviecki, Penguin Canada, $25. Geoff Olson can be reached at gefo@telus.net

Terra Madre

A SPEECH BY HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES

at the Terra Madre (Mother Earth) conference, Turin, Italy

Ladies and Gentlemen, I can't tell you how pleased I am to be with you today and to share in this vitally important discussion about the future of small scale agriculture and of artisan food producers throughout the world.

The fact that no fewer than 5,000 food producers have gathered here today, under the "Slow Food" banner, is a small but significant challenge to the massed forces of globalization, the industrialization of agriculture and the homogenization of food – which seem somehow to have invaded almost all areas of our life today.

I have always believed that agriculture is not only the oldest, but also the most important of humanity's productive activities. It is the engine of rural employment and the foundation stone of culture, even of civilization itself. And this is not just some romantic vision of the past: today some 60 per cent of the four billion people living in developing countries are still working on the land.

So when I read "visions", such as that for the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, for instance, which are based on transforming traditional, local agricultural economies into "powerhouses" of technological agriculture, based around monoculture, artificial fertilisers, pesticides and GM, my heart sinks. The missing ingredient in these great plans is always sustainable livelihoods and its absence increases the existing, awful drift towards degraded, dysfunctional and unmanageable cities.

The one resource the developing world has in abundance is people, so why are we promoting systems of agriculture that negate this advantage and seem bound to contribute directly to further human misery and indignity?

It is a sobering thought, ladies and gentlemen, that almost all of the next one billion of net global population growth (over the next twelve to fifteen years) will take place in urban slums. In one slum alone - which I'm not going to name because it is in a country for which I have great affection – more than 800,000 people, half of them under the age of fifteen, already live illegally in less than four square kilometres of the city. Even more sobering is the thought: what will these conditions breed for the future? Hopelessness, crime, extremism, terrorism? Who will deal with these chickens when they come home to roost on a globalized perch?

Despite the best intentions of many, we have to face up to the fact that often, the consequence of globalization is greater unsustainability. It is all very well talking meaningfully of the need for "globalization with a human face", but the reality is frequently somewhat different. Left to its own devices, I fear that globalization will – ironically – sow seeds of ever-greater poverty, disease and hunger in the cities and the loss of viable, self-sufficient rural populations. I don't think anyone would claim to have many answers, technological or otherwise, about what could possibly be done to reverse this process. The 800,000 people in the slum I mentioned earlier are not simply going to head back to the land overnight. But, surely, the first step to finding solutions is being willing to face up to both the causes and the scale of the problem – and this requires the globalization of responsibility.

I have a feeling that by now it may be quite well known that I am inclined to doubt whether GM food, for instance, will be – on balance – a contribution to the greater good of humanity. In doing so, I am not simply being dogmatic. I believe it is both legitimate and important to ask

continued on page 15

Prince Charles and Percy Schmeiser find common ground on the topics of organic farming, slow foods, and opposition to GMOs.

Shifting towards kindness

UNIVERSE WITHIN

by Gwen Randall-Young

If, at the beginning and end of our lives we depend upon others' kindness, why then in the middle should we not act kindly towards others?

- The Dalai Lama

It was heartening for me to see many tourists who had been vacationing in Thailand turn their efforts to helping the Thai people after the tsunami disaster. Throughout the world, the tsunami triggered in so many the desire to help our brothers and sisters who were suffering.

It made me think about how so many of us have the luxury of focusing on our own personal growth and evolution, while others struggle merely to survive. I considered the irony of how we, in the West, can work hard at our meditation and spiritual development so we can learn to be in the moment, and develop compassion, whereas in other parts of the world, in some communities, that is all there is.

In our culture, where we can become distracted by all that is material, it becomes easier to imagine we are separate from others in the world. It seems somehow justifiable to have so much, when others have so little. We can feel thankful our area was not hit by a natural disaster, and go on with our lives.

Yet, there is a nagging doubt. We would surely offer assistance if someone right in front of us were in need. When they are a world away, it is easy to put them out of our mind. We send in our donations, but then what more can we do?

The world is a living organism, so what happens in one part of the world 'body', affects the whole. We all felt the pain radiating out from the parts of the world that were hard-hit. It shocked our hearts open. What we can do now is keep them open. Love, compassion and caring shown to those in our immediate environment will add to the health of the whole.

We all felt the pain radiating out from the parts of the world that were hard hit. It shocked our hearts open. What we can do now is keep them open.

It is when we are helpless that we most rely upon the kindness of others. So, in this world there are the helpless, and the helpers. Throughout our lives we shift in and out of these roles. If we are not helpless, that is, if we are not ill or infirm, then it is for us to be the helpers.

While this may mean volunteering our time to help others, it can also simply mean being kind to all whom we encounter. It can mean putting good energy out into the world. Lest that sound like some metaphorical, esoteric concept, be aware that scientists have discovered that one person's negative, hostile mood can adversely affect the immune system of another, though some distance apart.

If one is angry, critical or negative to a partner or family member, he or she is contributing to toxicity in the home environment. If one becomes hostile while driving, that adds to the level of toxicity in the driving environment. Conversely, being kind and gentle, patient, and allowing, contributes to a healthy environment.

In a culture such as ours, with such a strong emphasis on the individual, we must find ways to balance that with concern and caring for the whole. Today's children are given so much – computers, cell phones, and a variety of extra-curricular activities – that, without balance, they will grow to be very self-centered adults. It would be wonderful if we incorporated, as part of every child's learning, an hour per week of some kind of charitable activity.

The tsunami, as devastating as it was, seems to have initiated a wave of compassion throughout the world, and particularly in school children. This is profoundly heartening. May it have initiated a shift in consciousness, pushing the tectonic plates of selfishness permanently underground.

May the consciousness of compassion, kindness and selflessness remain with us, changing the landscape of human awareness—blessing the injured, sick, and homeless throughout the world, members of our communities here at home, and our families.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice and a feature columnist for Common Ground magazine. Her books and tapes are available at www.gwen.ca, or contact her at gwendall@shaw.ca. They may also be ordered through Banyen Books.

Identification with your mind

THE GREATEST OBSTACLE TO ENLIGHTENMENT

To put it more accurately, it is not so much that you use your mind wrongly–you usually don't use it at all. It uses you. This is the disease. You believe that you are your mind. This is the delusion. The instrument has taken you over.

When you say Being, are you talking about God? If you are, then why don't you say it?

The word God has become empty of meaning through thousands of years of misuse. I use it sometimes, but I do so sparingly. By misuse, I mean that people who have never even glimpsed the realm of the sacred, the infinite vastness behind that word, use it with great conviction, as if they knew what they are talking about. Or they argue against it, as if they knew what it is that they are denying. This misuse gives rise to absurd beliefs, assertions, and egoic delusions, such as "My or our God is the only true God, and your God is false," or Nietzsche's famous statement "God is dead."

The word God has become a closed concept. The moment the word is uttered, a mental image is created, no longer, perhaps, of an old man with a white beard, but still a mental representation of someone or something outside you, and, yes, almost inevitably a male someone or something.

Neither God nor Being nor any other word can define or explain the ineffable reality behind the word, so the only important question is whether the word is a help or a hindrance in enabling you to experience that toward which it points. Does it point beyond itself to that transcendental reality, or does it lend itself too easily to becoming no more than an idea in your head that you believe in, a mental idol?

The word Being explains nothing, but nor does God. Being, however, has the advantage that it is an open concept. It does not reduce the infinite invisible to a finite entity. It is impossible to form a mental image of it. Nobody can claim exclusive possession of Being. It is your very essence, and it is immediately accessible to you as the feeling of your own presence, the realization I am that is prior to I am this or I am that. So it is only a small step from the word Being to the experience of Being.

What is the greatest obstacle to experiencing this reality?

Identification with your mind, which causes thought to become compulsive. Not to be able to stop thinking is a dreadful affliction, but we don't realize this because almost everybody is suffering from it, so it is considered normal. This incessant mental noise prevents you from finding that realm of inner stillness that is inseparable from Being. It also creates a false mind-made self that casts a shadow of fear and suffering. We will look at all that in more detail later.

The philosopher Descartes believed that he had found the most fundamental truth when he made his famous statement: "I think, therefore I am." He had, in fact, given expression to the most basic error: to equate thinking with Being and identity with thinking. The compulsive thinker, which means almost everyone, lives in a state of apparent separateness, in an insanely complex world of continuous problems and conflict, a world that reflects the ever-increasing fragmentation of the mind. Enlightenment is a state of wholeness, of being "at one" and therefore at peace. At one with life in its manifested aspect, the world, as well as with your deepest self and life unmanifested – at one with Being. Enlightenment is not only the end of suffering and of continuous conflict within and without, but also the end of the dreadful enslavement to incessant thinking. What an incredible liberation this is!

Identification with your mind creates an opaque screen of concepts, labels, images, words, judgments, and definitions that blocks all true relationship. It comes between you and yourself, between you and your fellow man and woman, between you and nature, between you and God. It is this screen of thought that creates the illusion of separateness, the illusion that there is you and a totally separate "other." You then forget the essential fact that, underneath the level of physical appearances and separate forms, you are one with all that is. By "forget," I mean that you can no longer feel this oneness as self-evident reality. You may believe it to be true, but you no longer know it to be true. A belief may be comforting. Only through your own experience, however, does it become liberating.

You also realize that all the things that truly matter – beauty, love, creativity, joy, inner peace – arise from beyond the mind. You begin to awaken.

Thinking has become a disease. Disease happens when things get out of balance. For example, there is nothing wrong with cells dividing and multiplying in the body, but when this process continues in disregard of the total organism, cells proliferate and we have disease.

The mind is a superb instrument if used rightly. Used wrongly, however, it becomes very destructive. To put it more accurately, it is not so much that you use your mind wrongly–you usually don't use it at all. It uses you. This is the disease. You believe that you are your mind. This is the delusion. The instrument has taken you over.

I don't quite agree. It is true that I do a lot of aimless thinking, like most people, but I can still choose to use my mind to get and accomplish things, and I do that all the time.

Just because you can solve a crossword puzzle or build an atom bomb doesn't mean that you use your mind. Just as dogs love to chew bones, the mind loves to get its teeth into problems. That's why it does crossword puzzles and builds atom bombs. You have no interest in either. Let me ask you this: can you be free of your mind whenever you want to? Have you found the "off" button?

You mean stop thinking altogether? No, I can't, except for a moment or two.

Then the mind is using you. You are unconsciously identified with it, so you don't even know that you are its slave. It's almost as if you were possessed without knowing it, and so you take the possessing entity to be yourself. The beginning of freedom is the realization that you are not the possessing entity – the thinker. Knowing this enables you to observe the entity. The moment you start watching the thinker, a higher level of consciousness becomes activated. You then begin to realize that there is a vast realm of intelligence beyond thought, that thought is only a tiny aspect of that intelligence. You also realize that all the things that truly matter – beauty, love, creativity, joy, inner peace – arise from beyond the mind. You begin to awaken.

Excerpted from The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle, $14 US, $15.75 Canada, trade paperback, published by New World Library and Namaste Publishing www.newworldlibrary.com or www.namastepublishing.com. Also available at local and online bookstores.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

List at: www.commonground.ca > Advertising > Datebook

DATEBOOK

FEB 2

Resolutions For Wellness Speaker: Karen Bourassa, Recreation Therapist Time: 7-8:15 pm. Lonsdale Quay Hotel, North Vancouver Free admission

FEB 5, 6

Dharma Talk with Mark Webber: The Nature of Freedom and the Ego 7:30pm each talk. come 10min early @ 1253 Chestnut Street Tomoyo @ 604-251-9079 (phone 9am-8pm)

FEB 7

The Secret Lives Of Office Supplies With The Carnival Band 8-12 pm Costume Dance party theme: Office Supplies. El Cocal, 1037 Commercial Dr. (604)444-MUSE www.thecarnivalband.com

FEB 9

Word Whips 7-9pm. Timed writing exercises Story Slam 9-11pm. Competition for 5 minute stories @ Our Town Cafe 245 E Broadway 604-254-0355 www.boltsoffiction.org

FEB 12

Shamanic Drumming Circle: Learn the way of the shaman. Dream your power animal spirit guardians. Newcomers welcome. 7pm. Donation. 604.418.9636. www.shamanichealing.info

FEB 13 & MAR 7

Aquarius & Valentine's Day Astrological Dinner. Picses: March 7. Star Anise Restaurant. Join Host Teresa Waclawik with talk by Astrologer Dawn Muncaster. Dinner, door prizes & entertainment. To reserve: 604-732-5538

FEB 16

Live With Purpose And Passion Speaker: Nancy Nicols, Certified Life coach 7-8:15pm Lonsdale Quay Hotel, North Vancouver Free admisssion

FEB 18

Bolts of Fiction 8-11pm. Open mic for prose and radio-play staging of excerpts from "East Van" by Chris Walter @ El Cocal 1037 Commercial Dr 604-254-0355 www.boltsoffiction.org

FEB 22

Silva Method Presentation Conference. UBC Robson Sq. 7 pm. Free Admission. info@silvamethod-canada.com 604 925 0816 See Event Section for Seminar information.

FEB 23

An Evening Of Spanish Music With Pancho And Sal.: 7-8 pm Lonsdale Quay Hotel, North Vancouver Free Admission

FEB 24

NLP Info Evening - learn what NLP can offer. 7-9pm. All welcome. Erickson College, 2021 Columbia St. 604.879-5600.

FEB 25

Twisted Poets 7-9pm. Spoken word open mic Liars of Orpheus 9-11pm. All of the arts jam session @ El Cocal 1037 Commercial Dr 604-321-4039 www.pandorascollective.com

FEB 25, 26, 27

Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Course.Intro: $10. Course: $295. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818.

FEB 25, 27

Meditation (Satsang) with Neelam who teaches with the blessing of HWL Poonja (Papaji). Feb 25 7:30-9:30pm; Feb 27 1-6 pm. Masonic Hall 1495 W8th. 604 254-9150.

FEB 25 & MAR 12, 13

The Pillars of Relationship An Experiential Workshop exploring the essence of primary relationships. Free Intro: Feb. 25, 7:00pm Workshop: March 12 &13 Details: 604 570-0742 or www.ravens2.ca

FEB 27

How to Become Magnetic to Your Ideal Mate with Kala H. Kos, PhD. For Singles: 9:30am - 5:30pm, $67 or 2 for $107 Pre-register: www.becomemagnetic.com 1-866-468-4862

MAR 6

Kits Classics + Worlds Beyond presents chamber music by Beethoven and Brahms with Zolta Rozsnyai, cellist. 4:00pm St. James Hall 3214 W. 10th Ave. 604-732-3990 Free

MAR 18, 19, 20

Introduction to Hand Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Course. Intro: $10. Course: $295.00. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818.

APR 29 - MAY 1

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SUNDAYS

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International Spiritualist Alliance #1A -320 Columbia Street, New West (Downstairs) 604-521-6336.Sunday Services 11am . Rev. Joyce Tarvin 604-433-6663 www.isacanada.ca

A Course in Miracles Community gathers for meditation / message / music 10:30am, 517 East 17th St. North Van. Call Rev. Susan 604-987-6985.

MONDAYS

Shambhala Buddhism Open House 7pm meditation instruction, sitting meditation practice. 8pm refreshments, Buddhist talk and/or video and discussion. Free. Shambhala Meditation Centre, 3275 Heather at West 17th

Acupuncture treatment 50% off with free consultation. Relief stress and pain etc. Mornings only at Acuqimed Centre. Broadway Station. By appt: 604-961-8834.

TUESDAYS

Reflexology Student Clinic sessions - only $15. Evenings only. By appointment. Pacific Institute of Reflexology. 604.875.8818

TUESDAYS

Free community lunch hosted by St. Mary's Church Kerrisdale, 2490 West 37th Ave at Larch St. Lunch served: 11:30am-1pm 604-261-4228.

WEDNESDAYS

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Hakomi Therapy and Trainings Individuals, Couples and Small Groups www.amindfulway.ca Jeff Chernove 604.952.4190

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DATEBOOK LISTINGS

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Gung Hay Fat Choy! It's the year 4703, the Year of the Rooster! The Chinese Lunar New Year Festival runs February 4 to February 8 this year with events from 5 pm to midnight at the Pacific Coliseum. From February 9 to February 13, the venue is Lansdowne Centre in Richmond. Past years have featured many large exhibitions, non-stop entertainment, traditional lion dance, parades, martial arts, music... Most malls in Richmond will also have events around this time. Take the kids! For info www.lunarnewyearfestival.

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judgment. I believe all is held in the divine whole, and works together for good, for love, for the evolution of consciousness and of the universe. Why should my perspective have grown darker recently? There are always challenging circumstances abroad in the world. Are today's affairs more challenging than those of 60 years ago, or 30 years ago? I don't subscribe to the idea that things are getting worse."

In his songs, Scott the rejects the cynic's perception of the world as something you deal with by hardening yourself. This point of view, and his rejection of it, was summed up in the apocalyptically sublime track Let It Happen.

Behold the lights of London,
The Skipper said as his hands shook,
His aura eaten by his jealousy
And all the drugs he took.
"This is the real world, buddy,
Toughen up your ass or it'll break."
I said "I'm not your buddy, buddy
And your real world is a fake."

There is a tough spirituality in Scott's music, reflected and refracted by The Waterboys' harder-edged rock and roll. My Dark Side has the singer warning a lover against emotional trespass, and poking at things inside him best left undisturbed. Ultimately, however, the Shadow doesn't have dominion over the singer's higher self.

I've been hurt,
But I'm alright
For underneath
There is a light.

This leads me to ask, does Mike Scott believe that love is a central principle at work in the universe? "Yes I do. I believe it is the stuff we are made of. That's why we feel most real, most alive, when we're touched by love, or when we act out of love."

Geoff Olson is a Vancouver writer and political cartoonist. You can reach him at gefo@telus.net

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Tsunami relief shows humanity's capacity to give

SCIENCE MATTERS

by David Suzuki

When a wall of water crashed across the shorelines of Indian Ocean countries on December 26, it was a powerful reminder of just how vulnerable humanity can be to the forces of nature – especially people living in developing countries.

Dramatic and devastating, the tsunami left about 250,000 dead, millions homeless and caused billions of dollars in damage. Fortunately, the world has responded with an enormous outpouring of support. Within days of the disaster, politicians in developed countries began to announce aid packages. Donations from the public have been even more remarkable. In fact, some aid agencies have stopped accepting relief money specifically for the tsunami disaster because they simply don't have the capacity to spend it on the ground in the afflicted countries.

But in all our efforts to bring some hope to those suffering, we mustn't forget that the developing world needs our help every day. Those living in poorer countries do not often have access to the services and infrastructure that we take for granted. At the best of times they may not have healthy food, medical services, clean water or sanitation. In times of crisis, what little these countries have to protect their citizens can easily be overwhelmed.

We also must not forget that the tsunami isn't the only humanitarian crisis facing the developing world today. Last year, more than 1.5 million Africans died from AIDS. Every year, more than two million people die from tuberculosis and one million people die from malaria, most of them in developing countries. These diseases are part of the reason why nearly one-fifth of children born in sub-Saharan Africa will not live past the age of five.

The tsunami has also taken the spotlight off other long-suffering regions, such as Sudan and Uganda. Millions of refugees in these areas are still living in squalid camps. Such camps are breeding grounds for the same diseases that experts are concerned could become rampant in areas affected by the tsunami because of a lack of sanitation.

None of this is to say that countries suffering in the wake of the tsunami don't need our help – they do. But the tsunami was a sobering reality check. Our world is unpredictable and disaster could strike any time. When it does, it often hurts poorer regions the most. Yet, one glance at the list of casualties from the tsunami and it becomes clear that the disaster's reach goes far beyond Asia. Canadians, Swedes, Americans and those of many other nationalities also died. Our world has really become a much smaller place.

Since the disaster, there have been calls for a better tsunami early warning system. That seems obvious. But warnings are only useful if they are heeded. And we are getting all sorts of warnings about the future that we continue to ignore. We were told, for example, that coral reefs and mangrove forests helped buffer coastlines from damaging waves. Yet many such ecosystems in the Indian Ocean were lost to development in recent years – ecosystems that may have offered some protection to some areas from the tsunami.

Scientists are also continuing to warn us about the effects of climate change – especially on developing nations that lack the infrastructure to respond to more frequent severe weather events, rising sea levels and changing precipitation patterns that a warming world is expected to bring.

Unfortunately, while the developed world's response to the tsunami disaster has been heartening, our response to climate change has been tepid at best. It's not that humanity lacks the capacity to respond. Obviously, judging from recent events, humanity's capacity for compassion can be profound. It's just unfortunate that it takes a tsunami to trigger it.

Take the Nature Challenge and learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

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Easter Islander or Tikopian?

EARTHFUTURE.COM

by Guy Dauncey

Among my friends, there are many who are very troubled about the way things are going on our little planet, isolated on an obscure limb of the Milky Way galaxy.

Some have a deeply pessimistic feeling. They despair of the way we humans are ravaging our ecosystems. They point to Easter Island, where over the centuries, the Polynesian settlers first destroyed the tropical paradise they had found, and then turned on each other and fought to the death over the last remaining resources, while all the time praying to some stupid stone statues. The Mayans did much the same thing.

They see this as a metaphor for all humanity, and if you look at the facts in a purely material way, it's easy to agree. Whether you consider what we're doing to the oceans, the atmosphere, the forests, the farmlands, our planet's wildlife, the melting polar ice caps, the toxins that are accumulating inside our bodies, or the unbelievable sums of money that we spend on fighting while children suffer and starve, it does seem as if we are behaving with the same short-sightedness and stupidity that have destroyed previous human civilizations. Ronald Wright's recent Massey lectures A Short History of Progress, broadcast on CBC's Ideas, have strengthened this deep sense of hopelessness and pessimism.

When facing such terminal despair, what can be more comforting than to believe salvation is just around the corner, whether of a New Age or a cultist variety? The Christian fundamentalist belief in the end times, the Rapture and the imminent return of Jesus is every bit as stupid as the Easter Islanders' belief that if they built enough statues, their problems would be mystically solved. If you doubt this, check out www.raptureready.com, and wonder. This is the kind of stuff that some members of the Bush government believe in, and use to shape their policies on Israel and the Middle East. (See www.villagevoice.com/issues/0420/perlstein.php)

Easter Island statues

My personal response to it all is "Phooey!" In justification for my positive outlook, I call to the witness stand the Polynesian islanders of Tikopia, who live in the Solomon Islands 1,000 kilometres east of Honiara (6,000 kilometres west of Easter Island).

About 1,000 years ago, they too began to observe the collapse of their island ecosystem, but rather than go loopy, they decided over a period of several hundred years to limit their population growth to zero, to shift to forest-based permaculture, and to stop keeping animals for meat on the island. The result has been a complete turnaround, and they now enjoy a very stable and peaceful life, of which they are very proud. (See www.janesoceania.com/solomons_tikopia)

The critical piece which we need to understand is this. All positive change occurs in three stages. First, you visualize the outcome, and picture the future as a clear reality in your mind. This is known as hope. We practise it every day, even though it is often unconscious. Secondly, you summon up the will to act. You engage your mental and spiritual muscle, and decide to act in the direction of your vision. And then thirdly, you act.

> The Christian fundamentalist belief in the end times, the Rapture and the imminent return of Jesus is every bit as stupid as the Easter Islanders' belief that if they built enough statues, their problems would be...solved.

This sequence is true whether you are aiming to win a soccer tournament, plan a party, or organize a campaign to stop violence against women.

So here's the key. The Easter Islanders lost hope. They were so isolated that they lost hope of contact with other Polynesians, and lost the vision of their heritage. From that moment on, their demise was ordained.

The Tikopians did not lose hope. They were close enough to other Polynesians to know that their life and culture were deeply valuable, and they held onto hope as they worked to change the way they lived and protect their island ecosystem.

I hope you appreciate the power of these ideas. The single most powerful factor in determining whether a culture will destroy itself or rejuvenate itself is its own inner choice whether to hold fast to hope or to give up hope.

As a planet, we certainly appear to be isolated. If there are other space-beings who know of our existence, they are either being very shy, or they are obeying the Galactic Guide to Immature Civilizations (Rule 37: Don't reveal yourselves until they have stopped exhibiting paranoid aggressive tendencies), or they've been with us all along, masquerading as angels, devas and other bright spirits.

As a community of people, we are not isolated. Our planet is chock full of people who have the ideas, the skills and the commitment needed to generate the vision, the political will and the results that are needed to steer ourselves onto a different path. All that we need is you!

Just remember this: it is we ourselves who are the heroes in the Earth-saga, and there's nothing more that the villains want than for us to give up and say "It's hopeless." Well, phooey to that.

Guy Dauncey is editor of EcoNews, author of Earthfuture: Stories From a Sustainable World, and president of the BC Sustainable Energy Association. He lives in Victoria. www.earthfuture.com

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whether some people's faith in the potential of this and other new technologies is a product of wishful thinking, or of the hype generated by vested interests.

In the long-term, are these methods really going to solve mankind's problems, or just create new ones? And how will we regulate them effectively? There are a great many examples of earlier, well-meaning attempts to control pests or improve the environment which have gone drastically wrong. And I'm simply not convinced that we have absorbed the lesson, which is that manipulating Nature is, at best, an uncertain business.

Even if we discount the potential for disaster, there is still the question of whether this is the right direction to take. If all the money invested in agricultural biotechnology over the last fifteen years had been invested in developing and disseminating genuinely sustainable techniques – those that work with, rather than against, the grain of Nature – I believe that we would have seen extraordinary, and genuinely sustainable, progress.

The problem, perhaps, is that techniques such as inter-cropping, agroforestry, green manuring, composting and biological pest control offer less prospect of commercial gain to those who have money to invest. The hundreds of millions of people who would gain are the much-derided practitioners of so-called "peasant agriculture", who have very little money, but who are the long-term guardians of biodiversity.

One of the arguments used by the "agricultural industrialists" is that it is only through intensification that we will be able to feed an expanded world population. But even without significant investment, and often in the face of official disapproval, improved organic practices have increased yields and outputs dramatically. A recent UN-FAO study revealed that in Bolivia potato yields went up from four to fifteen tonnes per hectare.

In Cuba, the vegetable yields of organic urban gardens almost doubled. In Ethiopia, which twenty years ago suffered appalling famine, sweet potato yields went up from six to thirty tonnes per hectare. In Kenya, maize yields increased from two-and-a-quarter to nine tonnes per hectare. And in Pakistan, mango yields have gone

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Megacorps vs healthy foods

THE ORGANIC WAY

by Marya Skrypiczajko

Organic agriculture is growing faster than any other sector of the food industry and being philosophically opposed to conventional agriculture, there has to be some backlash.

Nonetheless, I am tired of reading in the mainstream press that organic food is no healthier than conventional food and that it only serves a health-crazed niche market.

To me it seems completely clear that organic food is healthier. It is not grown with chemical pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. It is not irradiated and it is as GMO-free as possible. As well, an increasing number of studies show organic foods are more nutritious than their conventional counterparts.

So how do they get away with slagging organic food? Well, the big corporations invested in conventional agriculture direct a lot of money into discrediting organic farming practices and organic foods. They fund right-wing study centres like the Hudson Institute, as well as many universities. Then when their studies are published and read by the public, they are credited to a serious institution, doing bad research, but still believable. But that's just one side of the story.

On the other side, we have a recent study by the Ontario College of Family Physicians linking pesticide use to cancers, fertility problems, birth defects and neurological diseases; statistics showing that farmers have the highest occupational cancer rate in the US; and universities publishing studies that demonstrate organic food is more nutritious.

It's nature, completely straightforward, that gives organic food these advantages.

First of all, organic farming practices force plants to develop better immune systems than conventional plants because they must have the strength to naturally combat attacks of bugs and insects. Plants with stronger immune systems contain more phytochemicals, the substance that gives plants colour, flavour, smell and texture. Phytochemicals are considered to be beneficial to human health. www.upwardquest.com/immune-support/08-plant-immune.html

As well, conventional farming uses fertilizers heavy in nitrogen content which stimulates quick plant growth and thus creates large vegetables with both high size-to-nutrient ratios and high water-to-nutrient ratios. Organic farmers use slow-release forms of nitrogen, such as composted manure so their plants do not grow as quickly and end up with denser concentrations of nutrients. As well, plants that have a high dry matter to water ratio contain more health-promoting antioxidants such as flavonoids and polyphenolics that reduce the chances of cancer and heart disease. Studies also show that the high nitrogen levels in conventional crops reduce the concentration of vitamin C in many leafy green vegetables, tomatoes and citrus fruits.

In a 2001 study by Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland researchers looked at the vitamin, mineral and nitrate content of organic crops, as well as their protein quantity and quality. Their results showed organic crops contain significantly more vitamin C, iron, magnesium and phosphorus than conventional crops, a better quality of protein, a higher content of nutritionally significant minerals, and lower amounts of some heavy metals.

Another point in favour of organic foods is that most fruits and vegetables reach their peak nutrition when fully ripened on the plant. Not all, but a lot of organic foods are sold locally at farmers' markets, fruit stands and small grocery stores that deal directly with the farmers, so they can be left on the plants to ripen and then picked just before going to market. The conventional produce sold in most grocery stores has been picked green and then ripened on the 1,000 kilometre-plus journey to market.

> Common sense together with scientific studies tells us that organic food is the better choice for our health.

Eggs and meat from free range animals are also found to be superior to those from animals raised in cages or feedlots. Free-range eggs have more vitamin E, folic acid and vitamin B12 than factory-farmed eggs. Grass-fed beef contains more of vitamins E, A and D, more betacarotene and omega 3s (the good fats), and less overall fat. For those of you more interested in studies done on naturally raised animals, check out www.eatwild.com or www.pasture-to-plate.com and you'll find all kinds of interesting studies and articles.

Common sense together with scientific studies tells us that organic food is the better choice for our health. Maybe if there is enough publicity in this regard, we'll eventually defeat the naysayers. Let's hope so.

Marya Skrypiczajko is the author of BC the Organic Way – Where to Find Organic Food in British Columbia. www.bctheorganicway.com

Your happy healthy heart

NUTRISPEAK

by Vesanto Melina MS, RD

Fifteen years ago, Dr. Dean Ornish revolutionized our approach to heart disease by demonstrating that individuals with serious heart disease could reverse their condition with lifestyle changes and without the use of medication. His four-point program included:

1. a very low-fat vegetarian diet (less than 10 percent calories from fat),
2. stress management and group support,
3. exercise (such as daily walking),
4. avoidance of smoking.

After one year, 82 percent of the participants experienced regression of their disease, shown by angiograms conducted at the beginning and end of the year. In contrast, the disease continued to progress in members of the control group, who followed a conventional "heart healthy" diet providing 30 percent or less calories from fat. Over the next four years, while the experimental group members continued to reverse their arterial damage, those in the control group got steadily worse and had twice as many cardiac events.

Ornish's program was repeated with patients in retreats throughout North America. Brenda Davis (my Kelowna-based co-author on Becoming Vegetarian and Becoming Vegan) and I had the good fortune to be staff dietitians with some of these retreats. Over time, improvements were made, including the provision of dietary sources of omega-3 fatty acids, and an increased emphasis on whole foods.

In 1999, Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn had similar success in an intensive study that followed patients over a 12-year period, during which they followed a low-fat vegan diet, coupled with cholesterol-lowering medication. Approximately 70 percent experienced reversal of their cardiovascular disease.

This spring in the Okanagan, there will be a seminar for health professionals, (Kelowna April 8), and another for the public (Kelowna April 9), repeated in Penticton April 10. www.okanaganhealthforum.com. Presenters will include Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn (Arrest and Reversal Therapy for Coronary Heart Disease), Brenda Davis (Defeating Diabetes), myself (Food Allergy Survival Guide) and Dr. Colin Campbell (The China Study).

As the dust settles around the high carb/low carb diet furor, one guideline has become crystal clear. To quickly and significantly reduce your risk of chronic disease (diabetes and cardiovascular disease) and/or drop some excess weight, a cardinal rule is to eat only intact grains. This means whole, unbroken grains such as brown rice, quinoa, millet, buckwheat and oat groats. In the process, you will eliminate refined carbohydrates such as white flour and even products made with whole grain flour; you will avoid crackers, pasta, bakery products and bread. When wheat and other grains are ground into flour, the grain cells are broken. Whole grains that have been ground have a significantly different effect on blood glucose levels; intact grains are far more supportive of excellent health.

This aggressive approach to cleaning up your carbohydrate intake automatically and drastically reduces your intake of processed foods, since so many are flour-based. The recipe below is a great way to begin the adventure of using whole grains. Plus, it's a heart-warming way to start your day, on a chilly February morning.

Whole Grain Cereal

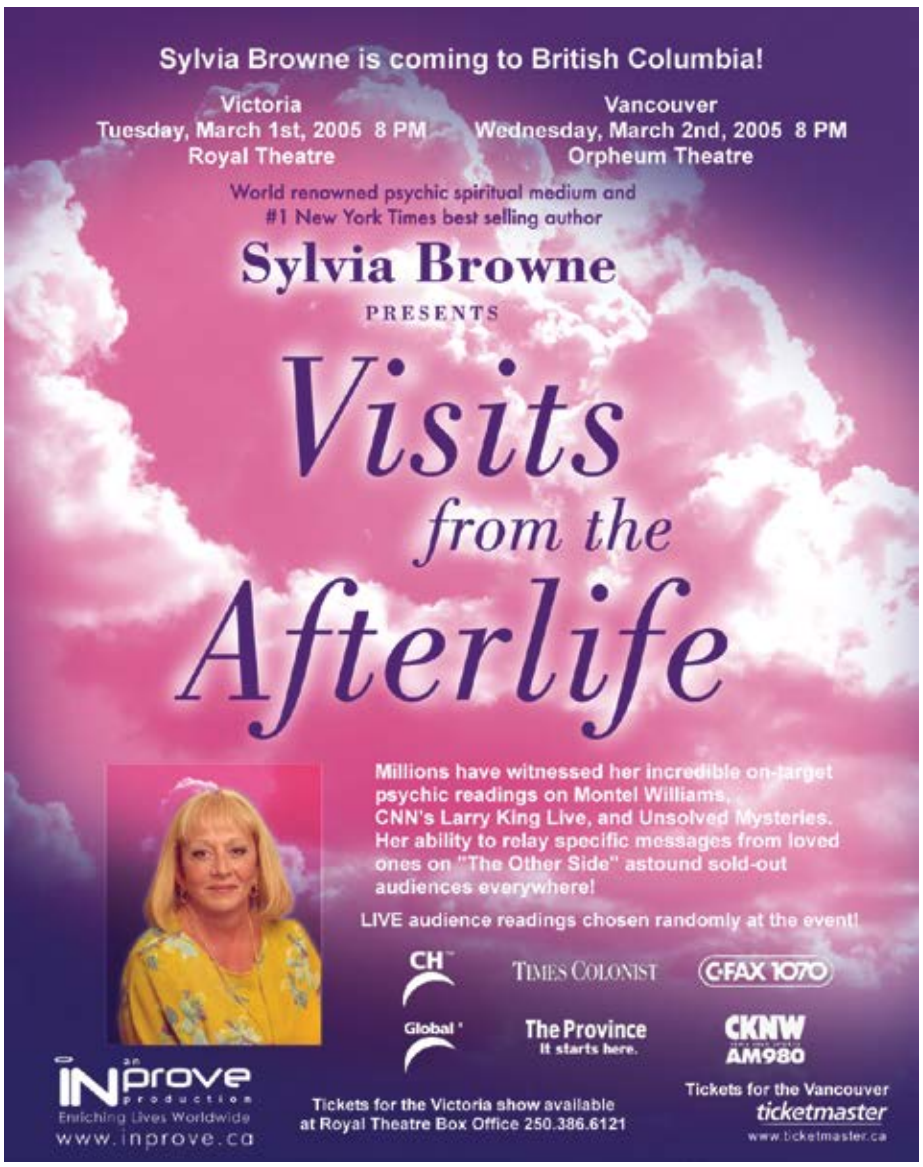
This recipe makes a satisfying and delicious breakfast for a family. It can be used for one or two people, since leftovers can be refrigerated and used for several days as a nourishing, soothing snack, served as a warm cereal or cold pudding. As grain combinations, use 1/3 cup each of any three of: brown rice, wheat berries, millet, barley, oat groats, or kamut berries. For a high protein yet gluten-free combination, choose 1/3 cup each of any three of: brown rice, buckwheat, millet, quinoa, or amaranth. Create your own unique combinations.

1 cup uncooked grain (see combos above)
4 cups water
1/2 tsp salt (or to taste)
1/2 cup dried fruit such as raisins, cranberries, currants, or chopped apricots, prunes, figs or dates
1/2 cup fortified soymilk or rice milk

Place grains, water and salt (if using) in the top of double boiler or a heavy pot and bring to a boil. If using a double boiler, place above boiling water and simmer for 2-3 hours. If pan is directly over heat, lower heat, and simmer for 2-3 hours, checking occasionally that it does not boil dry. If necessary, add a little water. Add dried fruit and milk and cook for another 1/2 hour. Serve with fresh fruit and your choice of milk.

Makes 5 cups.

Vesanto Melina is a registered dietitian, internationally known speaker and personal consultant. Attend Saturday nutrition and cooking workshops (February 19: Gluten-free, Wheat-free; March 5: Nondairy calcium; April 23 Spring cleanse) 45 minutes east of Vancouver; phone 604-882-6782 or Fort Integrated Health Clinic 604-888-8325. See www.nutrispeak.com.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The joy of youth

CULTURE

FILMS WORTH WATCHING

by Robert Alstead

Parodies of the Hollywood film industry have been worn thin by repetition, and the idea of watching prima donnas indulging in movie-set melodramas might seem a trying experience, especially when the prima donna in question is a spoilt-brat, 12-year-old movie star. However, Toronto-based writer-director-star Don McKellar's feel good comedy Childstar manages to negotiate most of the pitfalls of the genre by blending a smart script with fine performances.

Hollywood moguls desperate to wring the last cent out of their hottest star before his voice breaks, send Taylor Brandon Burns (Mark Rendall) to Canada to shoot an action thriller that sounds like Home Alone Meets Air Force One.

Rick (McKellar), a struggling indie filmmaker, who is hired to chauffeur the pre-pubescent star and his listless, hard-nosed mother Suzanne (Jennifer Jason Leigh), quickly finds that he's got himself into a lot more than he bargained for. Taylor is permitted to act the little Napoleon on and off set, getting through a succession of tutors and creating a waking nightmare for his producers. Rick is blind enough to the politics to be drawn closer to the boy and his mother. He also has an ability to negotiate the boy's manipulations and tantrums, which lands him with greater responsibility over the star, so that when Taylor disappears from the set, it is Rick who leads the search for him.

Rick (Don McKellar) gets his first lesson in working with a child star from Suzanne (Jennifer Jason Leigh) when meeting at the airport.

Although some scenes making fun of the movie industry machine have a same-old feel, the focus on the peculiar way that the Hollywood celebrity system treats children like mini VIP adults gives the satire and showbiz jokes a freshness and bite. McKellar, Rendall and Leigh also provide a strong emotional axis around which events take place, with great rapport between them throughout.

Also out now is The Chorus (Les Choristes) – France's entry in the foreign-language movie category at this year's Oscars – about a music teacher who wins over and inspires his tough bunch of children at a Draconian boarding school by forming a boys' choir. Critics are calling the film a French sell-out, but the feel-good weepy has been pulling in the crowds in France.

Walt Disney is in its traditional stomping ground with Pooh's Heffalump Movie, which opens on February 11. The animation follows the adventures of Pooh Bear and friends as they track down a mysterious purple beast in 100 Aker Wood.

Finally, if you are looking for something a little more highbrow, catch Al Pacino and Jeremy Irons in The Merchant of Venice before it goes. The Wolf on iofilm.com gave this his highest recommendation. He writes: "The acting is spot on and the dialogue, commonly the trickiest element in Shakespeare adaptations, is impeccably delivered in a modern tone that really makes the film accessible to audiences of all literary backgrounds – a feat in itself. Pacino's performance is nothing short of superb, one of the most passionate and inspiring of his career. Don't let the fact that this is Shakespeare put you off. As well as a great way of introducing yourself to the most influential Englishman who ever penned a sonnet, the film is a gem."

Robert Alstead writes for www.iofilm.com

continued from page 5

it was first performed in prewar Europe. The music of the Beatles was considered decadent and destructive by the balding guardians of British high culture. Today the most shocking piece of art is the contemporary protest song – shocking only in the sense that it is now so rarely heard on corporate rock radio. The music industry prefers to direct its promotional efforts on the smoothed down, processed Pablum of mega-selling boy bands and teen Stepford sirens. Programming behemoths like Clear Channel, which owns 1,200 stations in the US, prefers to not rock the boat, the vote, or anything else. But artists like Michael Franti and Green Day still get manage to get around the media matrix, which is still not completely monolithic – good stuff still trickles through.

Like the lion in C.S. Lewis's Narnia, who sang the world into existence, the best artists seem to embody the spirit of creation itself. Even comedy has its ahead-of-their-time visionaries, like Lenny Bruce, Australian Barry Humphries and the late Bill Hicks. The skill of the standup prophet is to say the unsayable, and put it such a way that repressed energy is released in laughter.

The point of all this is that at Common Ground, we are interested in promoting the artists who aren't just of their time, but standing a bit outside it, consensus-wise or market-wise. Our goal is to showcase the best, the brightest and most visionary of the creative work that's out there, both locally and globally. That includes work that acknowledges the world, and the self, in all its darkness. If we have a bias, however, it will be toward the work that is uplifting or even transcendent. With this in mind, we begin this month with a look at the work of the brilliant Scottish singer/songwriter Mike Scott.

Write to Geoff Olson at gefo@telus.net

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continued from page 15
up from seven-and-a-half to twenty-two tonnes per hectare.

Imposing industrial farming systems on traditional agricultural economies is actively destroying both biological and social capital and eliminating the cultural identity which has its roots in working on the land. It is also fuelling the frightening acceleration of urbanization throughout the world and removing large parts of humanity from meaningful contact with Nature and the food that they eat.

So this "flight from the land" is happening in both developed and developing countries. Unfortunately, these trends towards urbanization are almost inevitable while societies throughout the world continue to put a low valuation on their food, denigrate food to the status of fuel and abandon any loyalty to their local and indigenous farmers.

But there is another consequence too. There is now a growing body of evidence that suggests that in the so-called developed world we are in the process of creating a nutritionally impoverished underclass – a generation which has grown up on highly processed fast food from intensive agriculture and for whom the future looks particularly bleak, both from a social and a health standpoint.

As Eric Schlosser has pointed out in his brilliant book Fast Food Nation, fast food is a recent phenomenon. The extraordinary centralization and industrialization of our food system has occurred over as little as twenty years. Fast food may appear to be cheap food, and in the literal sense it often is.

But that is because huge social and environmental costs are being excluded from the calculations. Any analysis of the real costs would have to look at such things as the rise in food-borne illnesses, the advent of new pathogens such as E. coli 0157, antibiotic resistance from the overuse of drugs in animal feed, extensive water pollution from intensive agricultural systems, and many other factors. These costs are not reflected in the price of fast food, but that doesn't mean that our society isn't paying them.

So perhaps, having said all this, you can begin to see why I am such an admirer of the Slow Food Movement and of all the hard-working, indomitably independent people like yourselves, all over the world, who are part of it.

Only a few years ago it would have been impossible to imagine that so many people across the world who are either directly involved in small-scale artisan food production, or are interested in consuming the fruits of such labours, should gather together in this way. This, of course, is a great tribute to the unceasing energy of Dr. Carlo Petrini.

Slow food is traditional food. It is also local – and local cuisine is one of the most important ways we identify with the place and region where we live. It is the same with the buildings in our towns, cities and villages. Well-designed places and buildings that relate to locality and landscape and that put people before cars enhance a sense of community and rootedness. All these things are connected.

We no more want to live in anonymous concrete blocks that are just like anywhere else in the world than we want to eat anonymous junk food which can be bought anywhere. At the end of the day, values such as sustainability, community, health and taste are more important than pure convenience. We need to have distinctive and varied places and distinctive and varied food in order to retain our sanity, if nothing else.

The Slow Food Movement is about celebrating the culture of food, and about sharing the extraordinary knowledge – developed over millennia – of the traditions involved with quality food production. So it is important to ask how this gathering can promote those ideals more widely, particularly when we are faced with remorseless pressure to operate on a larger and ever more impersonal scale.

I believe you are in a better position to answer that question than me, but for what it's worth, I do believe that simply coming together and sharing ideas, and above all joining the international Slow Food Movement and to create, by the extraordinary process of cross-fertilization and invigoration which takes place at gatherings like these, an ever more influential and powerful association that cannot be so easily ignored, the answers will emerge organically. As the old saying goes, there is safety in numbers, and people tend to listen to organisations with a very large membership. They do!

On this theme it does seem to me that the other great food movement with which I am associated, the organic movement, has so much in common with the Slow Food Movement and this communality of purpose and direction ought to be a source of co-operation and, also of course, celebration! So I do hope that we may see ever-closer links between these two important movements.

And the importance of your Movement cannot be overstated. That is, after all, why I am here – to try and help draw attention to the fact that in certain circumstances "small will always be beautiful", and to remind people, as John Ruskin in the 19th century did, back in England, that "industry without art is brutality".

After all, the food you produce is far more than just food, for it represents an entire culture – the culture of the family farm. It represents the ancient tapestry of rural life; the dedicated animal husbandry, the struggle with the natural elements, the love of landscape, the childhood memories, the knowledge and wisdom learnt from parents and grandparents, the intimate understanding of local climate and conditions, the hopes and fears of succeeding generations.

Ladies and gentlemen, all of you represent genuinely sustainable agriculture and I salute you.

Prince Charles and Percy Schmeiser at the Terra Madre (Mother Earth) conference, Turin, Italy, 23rd October, 2004

Conversation between Prince Charles and Percy Schmeiser

We discussed Prince Charles' speech and I talked to him about my lawsuit with Monsanto on the rights of farmers to continue to use their own seeds and plants.

Prince Charles explained his organic farming operation in England and said that in the world there are a number of great food movements and he is very happy as an organic farmer to be involved. He congratulated me and my wife for standing up for farmers' rights world-wide, agreed with our belief that those rights should never be taken away and wished me continuing success in bringing this important message to people here and around the world.

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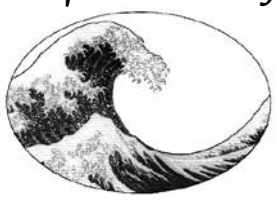

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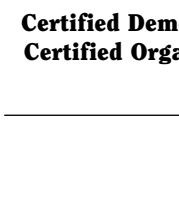

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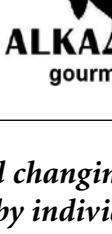

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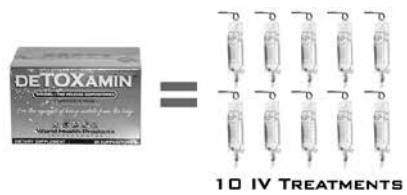

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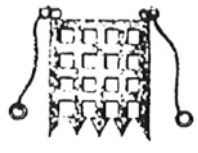

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Acceptance

SIMPLY...WOMAN!

by Crystal Andrus

We all have different versions of our body throughout our lives. In our quest to accept and even honour ourselves, we must begin to see ourselves for who we are. When we change our focus from being the best to being our best, we can rejoice that we will never look like anyone else. Why would we want to?

A healthy way to determine a realistic weight for you is the lowest weight that you have been since you were over the age of 25 (when you were eating sensibly and exercising reasonably) and maintained it for a minimum of two years. If you have never been at a weight you were happy with, then ask yourself if you are being irrational and expecting to be thinner than you should be. Or is it because you have never made an effort in your adult life to eat healthily, exercise and take care of your body? Be sure that your expectations are realistic and not based on Hollywood's unhealthy, skin-and-bones version of perfection.

And, as you start to make improvements in your life, don't be surprised by the reaction of the people who are close to you. Countless clients tell me that once they begin losing weight and looking good, their friends or family begin making negative comments or pulling away. If you find that every time you start to follow a diet your partner brings home chocolate, you need to ask yourself why. Better yet, you need to ask him why.

Sadly, we live in a world where many people are uncomfortable with your success and determination, especially if it's a physical or financial improvement. It subconsciously forces them to look at themselves, and if they don't like what they see, they feel threatened by our success. Realize that these are their fears – not yours – and don't be guided by them.

> When we change our focus from being the best to being our best, we can rejoice that we will never look like anyone else. Why would we want to?

Exercise

Getting fit takes a combination of five components: muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, cardiovascular training, and nutrition. Don't fear gaining muscle. You will not look like one of those female bodybuilders you've seen in magazines. It's impossible for you to look like that without lifting heavy weights and taking muscle-building supplements. Unless you want exactly the same shape you have right now, just smaller, you have to sculpt your body by contracting your muscles and toning your core body. Do your strength training workout three times, in the morning if possible. Train hard. It does and will work.

Nutrition

Reducing carbohydrates will absolutely work as a weight loss strategy in the short-term, and is why many carbohydrate-restricted diets are so popular. But if we stay on them we are causing ourselves long-term problems. Not only do we need carbohydrates for energy, we need them to live. Our brain needs at least five grams per hour just to function and our body requires close to ten grams an hour to fuel its biological functions.

The secret is to eat the right carbohydrates: with the slow release of sugar associated with low-glycemic carbohydrates, the blood doesn't feel a surge and thus very little insulin is released, meaning we don't get the crash. Our blood sugar, endorphins, and serotonin levels rise at a nice constant rate and begin declining at the same gentle pace so we feel content for at least three to four hours. This helps to avoid the cravings we feel after eating high glycemic carbohydrates such as white bread, white potatoes, and white sugar.

We also need to monitor how much carbohydrate—even of the low glycemic variety—that we eat in one sitting. Try to consume about 40% of your total calories from low-glycemic carbohydrates. And if you are going to eat high glycemic foods, watch how much you consume at one time. Keep your portions small.

I also recommend that everyone take a good quality multi-vitamin daily, including 50 mg vitamin B complex, 500-1000 mg vitamin C, 400 IU vitamin E, calcium and magnesium. Try taking your vitamins in a great tasting green drink! You also want to be sure to have 1000 mg of enteric-coated essential fatty acids daily from a toxin-free fish such as sardines, mackerel and anchovies to help with metabolism and to build healthy cells.

Crystal Andrus is a popular Canadian fitness expert and motivational speaker. This article is the third in a 12-part series.
www.simplywoman.com

Detail of painting "Wu Li" by Bill Porteous, reflecting the Chinese Five Elements. From the collection of Jawl Holdings Ltd.

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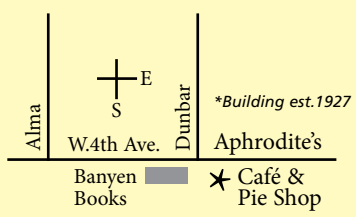

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Inside the Great Mystery that is,
we don't really own anything.
What is this competition we feel then,
before we go, one at a time, through the same gate?
Rumi (tr. Moyne and Barks)

On Track Zodiac

FEBRUARY 2005 by Ilona Hedi Granik

ARIES (March 21 – April 19)
You can hide or camouflage what you don't like about yourself. You redefine and chip away at the unique qualities that are yours. Personal intimacy and self-empowerment is at hand. It's time to make some lasting changes.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 21)
To meditate or medicate that is the question. Confrontation with a foggy disposition will dispel the ghosts of the past. You have discarded the worn out sheath. Choosing freedom you can now create a home for yourself, built on a solid foundation.

GEMINI (May 22 – June 20)
If you know you can't bend another's will to suit your own, then you will let go of any ties. Having the need to get your opinions known, you may have developed a style that may not get the results you want. Fear of failure will be your key toward triumph.

CANCER (June 21 – July 22)
The talking, but not doing part of your personality is showing itself. Seek and research the ideas you have and run with them. You may discover that any words you need to write, will practically write themselves. Shift your gears and get moving.

LEO (July 23 – Aug. 22)
The need to hide out and keep your privacy may be the solution. Could be you crave solace to get those creative juices fired up. When we shake hands, the left or right isn't important because either will do. You are blending diversity with accomplishment. Following the ebb and flow you get in the groove.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 – Sept. 22)
This would be a good time to hop off the merry go round. You are still moving pretty fast mentally, but the indecision will wind down. You can play out your fantasies and bring them to light. The music has begun.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 – Oct. 22)
You like to view your progress and get your own stamp of approval. Your judgments are few and the lessons are plentiful. It has been said that the inner trip is the best trip. Still though, your mentors will prove worthy and activate change. Be still and know.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 – Nov. 21)
You discovered that the sympathy vote didn't get you elected into the hearts of others. There is a no-blame clause in your way of thinking now. You have shown up for yourself and are making it real. Your inner compass will guide you.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 – Dec. 21)
As one chapter ends another begins and practical solutions appear. You allow co-workers into your stratosphere as you aim your arrow to the bull's eye of your goals. As a leader, you soar into the domain of your dreams. Success brings fulfillment.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 – Jan. 19)
If you have progressed into the next phase of your life with ease, the conquering becomes the knowing. With pinpoint effort you've tackled unforeseen forces that had bewildered you. You can move onto the next level with ease. The direction is clear.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 – Feb. 19)
Trust may come naturally to you. Perhaps you are open to meeting new people. Your day-to-day life is simple and there is nothing mundane about it. Esthetic pleasures are heightened. There is a gloss and shimmer to everything.

PISCES (Feb. 20 – March 20)
If you find a shortage in getting your needs met, the best you can do is celebrate yourself. Yours is the only reflection you are able to see. Those nagging inner conflicts will find solutions in a new context. Before long the miraculous will stop and tap you on the shoulder.

Ilona Hedi Granik is a clairvoyant consultant and author with 31 years of experience in astrology, multi-media art and healing. Ilona23@shaw.ca

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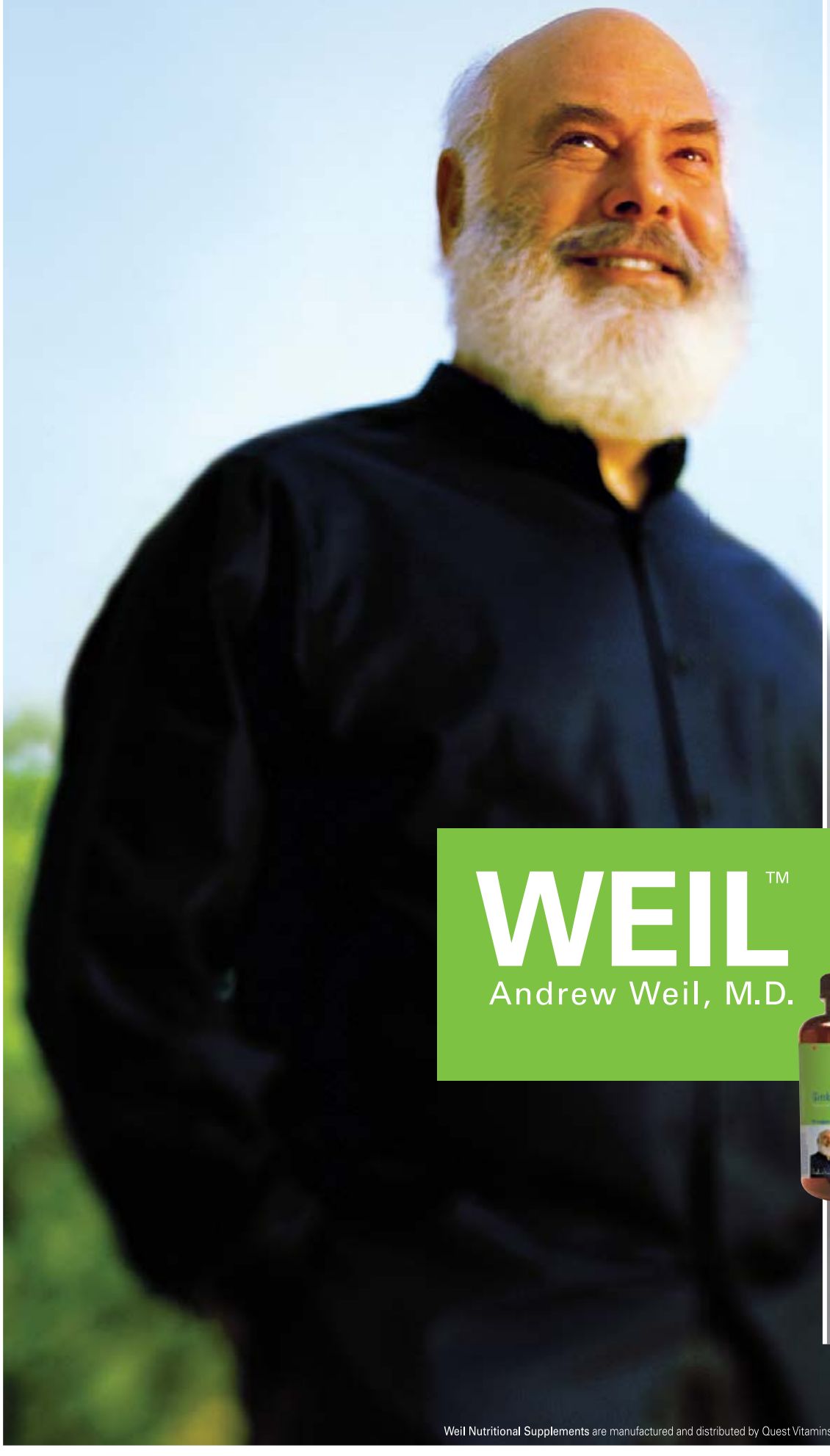

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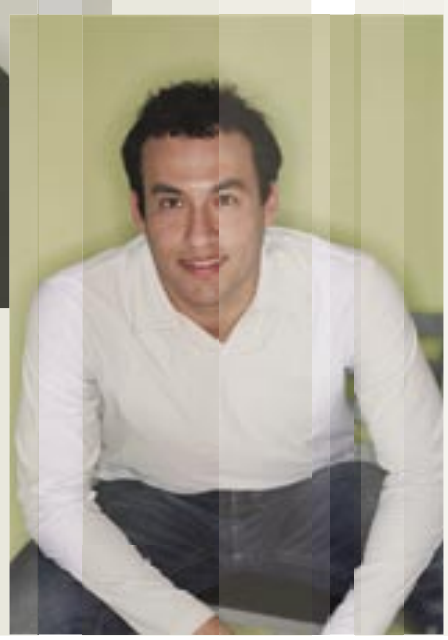

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